

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SEOUL 01821 111032Z

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UNCLAS SEOUL 1821

USDOC FOR KILPATRIC

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EFIS, KS

SUBJ: ROK OYSTER PRODUCTION AND EXPORT PROSPECTS FOR 1976

SUMMARY: ROK OYSTER PRODUCTION IS EXPECTED TO DECLINE BY ABOUT 2,000 METRIC TONS(M/T) IN 1976 FROM THE 13,000M/T FIGURE FOR 1975 AS A RESULT OF WATERWORM INFESTATION IN THE YOSU AND YOCHON-GUN AREA OF SOUTH CHOLLA PROVINCE. INCREASING COSTS AND STAGNANT INTERNATIONAL PRICES FOR CANNED OYSTERS HAVE LED TO A TERMINATION OF OYSTER CANNING OPERATIONS BY 16 OF THE 20 CANNERIES WHICH PACKED THEM IN 1975. EXPORTERS BELIEVE THAT SOUTHEAST ASIAN MARKET FOR BULK DRIED OYSTERS WILL BECOME ACTIVE IN 1976. END SUMMARY

1. THE GOVERNMENT HAS SET 15,000 M/T (RAW SHUCKED BASIS) AS THE OYSTER PRODUCTION GOAL AND 10,000 M/T AS THE EXPORT TARGET FOR 1976. HOWEVER RECENT INFESTATION OF WATERWORMS IN THE NTAH YOSULAND YOCHON-GUN IN SOUTH CHOLLA PROVINCE, IN THE OPINION OF EXPERTS, RENDERS THAT PRODUCTION GOAL UNATTAINABLE, AND SUGGESTS THE LIKEHOOD OF AN 11,000 M/T HARVEST FOR 1976. NEVERTHELESS, ROK OFFICE OF FISHERIES SOURCES EXPRESS THE VIEW THAT WATERWORM DAMAGE IS NOT CONSEQUENTIAL, AND THAT THE 1976 HARVEST WILL EXCEED THAT OF 1975 (12,000 M/T). THEY STRESS THAT 70PCT OF PRODUCTION IS FROM THE CHUNGMU AREA WHICH IS UNAFFECTED, AND THE REMAINING 30PCT OF PRODUCTION, THAT FROM YOSU AND CHINHAE, DOES NOT DERIVE FROM BEDS IN THE INFESTED AREA.

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PAGE 02 SEOUL 01821 111032Z

2. EXPORTS OF OYSTERS AMOUNTED TO \$104 MILLION (9,000 M/T)

IN 1975, OF WHICH 50 TO 55 PERCENT (APPROX. \$5.5 MILLION)
WAS TO THE UNITED STATES. EXPERTS ANTICIPATE THAT THE U.S.
MARKET WILL REMAIN AT ABOUT THE SAME LEVEL IN 1976 AND THAT
THE EXPORT IN BULK OF DRIED OYSTERS TO SOUTHEAST ASIA WILL
PERMIT ATTAINMENT OF THEIR TARGET.

3. CANNED OYSTER PRICES REMAINED FAIRLY STABLE IN 1975,
BUT RAW MATERIAL, FREIGHT AND LABOR COSTS HAVE EVIDENTLY
INCREASED TO THE POINT THAT MANY CANNERIES HAVE CEASED PACKING
OYSTERS. REPORTEDLY, ONLY 4 OF THE 20 KOREAN CANNERIES ACTIVE
IN 1975 ARE PROCESSING OYSTERS AT THIS TIME.
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